

March 17, 2021

The Honorable Claude M. Hilton
United States District Judge
The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia
401 Courthouse Square
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Judge Hilton:

I have prepared this Brief and am sending it to you and only you for your consideration. I do this in the same spirit as when I was a Congressional Fellow for Congressman Major R. Owens and prepared briefs for him.

Sir... *The power of Mercy is not strained...*

I am sure you have heard these words before and have also had them written to you imploring that you embrace these soulful words.

I, too, believe in these words, but I may view them through a different lens than would a seasoned jurist holding a person's life in his hands.

As you weigh what has been presented to you by the Prosecution and by the Defense, I proffer that what you have been given may not be complete, open, or transparent; rather, it was written by people to serve their own ends, no matter what the cost or the truth.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation started months ago, at the same time as the Durham Investigation, to identify a case or cases which could be used to substantiate, complement, and counter effects of the Durham Investigation. This was accomplished by researching back through old files to find something which could be developed or "spun" by the Bureau.

(For the timing of the FBI Investigation and the Durham Investigation, see Addendum # 1.)

Special Agents Jeffrey Parsons and Patrick Lueckenhoff are zealous and have exhibited aspects of being willing to make a name for themselves. I believe that, in another time and under other circumstances, more seasoned Agents would have acted otherwise and this investigation would not have been pursued to this stage and would have been abandoned.

Special Agent Lueckenhoff, although a 3rd generation FBI agent, is a relative newbie in the Bureau and seems especially anxious to make his name. I believe that he shared information with (or went online as) "@File411". On Twitter, @File411 mixed speculation with accusation on social media. Open Source Information revealed that @File411 wrote often about the case, calling the Debbins case "BIGGER than Hanssen!" — Which clearly, it is not.

Subsequent to my discovery, this Twitter account was suspended and these comments disappeared from the Internet... BUT fortunately, I shared a hard copy of this online communication with Ms. Allison Muller of Price Benowitz before it was deleted from Twitter. My hard copy was not returned to me with the remaining 2.5 reams of my email files that I had loaned to Price Benowitz. I believe, if sought, that the original @File411 Tweet could be recovered from Twitter via a law-enforcement request.

Meanwhile, I have come to question Peter Debbins' psychological state since his arrest. His actions prior to August 21st do not correlate with the Peter Debbins who not only pled guilty but also waived all of his rights, including FOIA requests!

This raises the fundamental question of this brief: **"Why?"**

A major fact is...

- **The sentencing of Peter Debbins poses many more questions than the answers presented by the Prosecution or by the Defense.**
Truth, accountability, and transparency seem to be conflicting issues for the Prosecution and Defense.
Disinformation is countering the fundamentals of Rule of Law and serving the needs of our Nation.

Judge Hilton, I would like to introduce myself. I am Dr. Elaine Sarao, Ph.D., an educator/professor and analyst who first met Peter Debbins in early 2015 when he was a graduate student at the Institute of World Politics, IWP, in Washington, DC.

I have enclosed my Bio and CV showing my credentials as an analyst in Open-Source Intelligence, OSI. I have provided analyses to the U.S. government for more than 15 years, while working *pro bono* for first the Congress as a Fellow for Foreign Affairs and then for the Department of State as a Franklin Fellow.

- My Master's degree from Syracuse University is in Communications and focused on information structure.
Presently I am the *pro bono* Associate Rector of Ukrainian-American Concordia University, UACU. UACU is the only Ukrainian university which is accredited in the U.S. and the EU.
As an educator, I have been called upon to deliver my analytic skills when lecturing in the U.S. and abroad on **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills.**

Between 2015 and January 29, 2020, I had limited professional engagement with Peter Debbins. After January 29th our relationship focused on his teaching at my school and a discussion of Russia's mounting use of disinformation in Ukraine, around the world, and *particularly* in the U.S.

I was drawn to ask Peter to work with UACU on issues of stability and security for Ukraine because of Peter's professionalism, intelligence, and his earlier work to support America and our core national principles. Moreover, Peter's fluent Russian would permit expansion and refinement of his English-language classes and would be supportive of American interests. I wanted that expertise for UACU.

Peter was always pro-U.S. and was supportive of Ukraine whenever we discussed Russia. Peter was very proud of his military service, his honorable discharge, and spoke of his niece in the military as proudly as if he were her father.

I had and have no professional or personal reservations about Peter Debbins' commitment to our Nation.

So... after January 29th of 2020, my contact with Peter was that of an academic shaping a proposal for Peter to teach "Cyber Security in Business" at UACU.

Our working arrangement provided me with a very different understanding of Peter than what the FBI has presented to the public. My experiences with Peter Debbins bear no resemblance to what the Prosecution has presented, which is based on information received from Special Agents Jeffrey Parsons and Patrick Lueckenhoff.

I believe it is critical to look closely look at what both Special Agents did as they endeavored to gather and shape evidence, especially when Mr. Parsons persisted in trying to make me say that Peter had tried to recruit me! Rather, it was I who sought Peter as a resource for my school. Parsons repeatedly refused to take "No" for my answer until I pointedly asked him, *"What have you not heard in what I have repeatedly said?"*

I have organized my overview of Mr. Debbins into sections:

- What I know about this case.
- What Peter told me about his work, his family, and more significantly, his childhood.
- The choices of how the case was created to be played in public, on social media.
- Questions about what was done to support the investigation, which did not provide substantive new and current facts but instead relied upon events from over 10 years ago which had been previously adjudicated while Peter was in the U.S. Military.
- The dynamics of COVID-19 have compounded life on every level, particularly for those in detention and needing comprehensive legal representation, like Peter.

No Trial. No Presentation by the Prosecution Nor by the Defense... *Thus my Analysis:*

- I believe that Peter Debbins has been used as a part of a larger operation in the Bureau to secure convictions necessary to substantiate their effectiveness in arrests of Russian espionage operatives.
- On September 9, 2020, I was surprised to be interviewed by two agents from the FBI because I had volunteered to be interviewed by State Department's Diplomatic Security.
In the interview, Mr. Parsons repeatedly pressed me to make statements that were not true and repeatedly sought to inject false information into the interview that would support their case against Mr. Debbins.
- Over many conversations with Mr. Debbins prior to his arrest on August 21st, I had come to understand that Peter believed he was working with the U.S. government! **In fact, I suggest that Mr. Debbins may *still* believe that he is part of a special government operation.**
- **Surprisingly and suddenly with limited consultation with his attorneys while in detention, Peter pled guilty *and* waived all of his rights, even to FOIA requests!** Incredibly this occurred only a few weeks after Mr. Benowitz and Mr. Barbari told me that there would be a vigorous defense of Peter at a jury trial in April 2021.

I provided the Defense copies of my emails with Peter Debbins which showed the extensive work (2.5 reams) that I, as UACU's Associate Rector, and Peter did to support Ukraine and the U.S. to counter disinformation from Russia via cyber-security training.

- **My analysis is that Peter Debbins, by pleading guilty, is sacrificing himself to save his family from total financial collapse and to become a “martyr” in the same spirit of sacrifice he had learned as a child. Realistically, his family does not have the financial resources to mount a costly defense, thus Peter will sacrifice himself.**

After reviewing his family history, I see how it combines in the “martyr” aspect of Peter’s personality, by imposing his upbringing on his actions since arrest.

If Peter did believe he was working with the U.S. government as a part of a special operation, it would support what I have come to view as a “Walter Mitty” aspect to his psychological makeup... living an exotic life almost within reach, yet always eluding grasp.

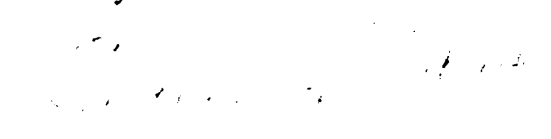
By pleading guilty it allows Peter to “fulfill” his destiny as a “Messianic” messenger, to leave the burden of his life behind, and to live as a “hermit” in prison left to his own fantasies.

Included with my Brief are links to support my statements and analysis.

I hope that you find my information and analysis helpful as you review Mr. Debbins’ case before his sentencing on April 16th.

I would be willing to answer, under oath, any questions regarding this document.

Sincerely,


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and

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